



THE UNIQUE POLITICAL ATTRIBUTES OF THE UNITED STATES' SYSTEM OF GOVERNANCE

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Received: 2019-03-30

Accepted: 2019-04-20

Published online: 2019-05-01

The two most important documents in the history of the American state are the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. These two essential documents have been the foundation of a country so rare and unique in the political and social mindset of a nation. Established a governance model that cannot be matched in the globe. *E pluribus unum* (Out of many, one). 50 states in one. A country with over 56 thousand governments. With thousands of governmental units divided into 36 thousand cities and towns, and 35 thousand separate districts! A mesmerizing reality for any other country but not for the USA that this diversity and multiplicity has united into one government, one nation and one flag! "Out of many, one" is a unique American hallmark! An inter-century reality that is not found anywhere else! Immigrants from all over the world came and continue to come to the land of freedom and plenty, but despite language, cultural and racial diversity, they are one. They are Americans! They live the American dream and try to be "good Americans," another concept that belongs only to America. "Out of many, one" is also seen in American society, a society that has reached an extraordinary harmony of the relationship between individualism and community. Two opposite binomials that perfectly and naturally merge into one. The individual fully reserves his/her personal rights and yet is free and responsible in the community, and part of a wider national affiliation. "Americans are so enamored of equality, they would rather be equal in slavery than unequal in freedom," wrote Alexis de Tocqueville in 1835 in his classic book *Democracy in America*. Even today, regardless of origin and affiliation, everyone is equal before the law! And every individual is offered the opportunity to be whoever he or she wishes to be. Every individual is treated as worthy and valuable to society. There have even been many attempts to import the US Constitution and system of government, and implement them in other parts of the world, but they have been unsuccessful. This has been due to the fact that the American Constitution and system of government are a reflection of the American mentality, values and identity. And this great achievement is thanks to the two most important documents of all times, the Declaration of Independence and the US Constitution.

Keywords: United States, Declaration of Independence, Constitution, President, Congress, Founding Fathers, Democracy.

The Declaration of Independence

Two of the most important founding documents of the American nation and state are the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. The Declaration of Independence cannot be well understood without analyzing the goals of the separation of the 13 British colonies in America from London and the authority of the King of England. Since from the end of 1692 until the signing of the Declaration of Independence, and the declaration of independence on July 4, 1776, a radical transformation of personal and social values and priorities is observed.

If the Puritan society of the time was subject only to Christian principles, organized politically under the direction of an elite, with ecclesiastical moral standards, the society of the year 1700 onwards seems to have been transformed into a materialistic society, indifferent to divine sovereign authority, and promoting of the political and social elites who, unlike before, now used the popular masses to their advantage and service.

Records of the time show that during the early 1700s, 5% of the people in Boston controlled 49% of the city's taxable assets. Even in Philadelphia and New York wealth was becoming more and more concentrated. The wills of the time show that in 1750, the wealthiest people in the city bequeathed sums of 20,000 pounds (equivalent to 5 million US dollars today).

It was this wealthy class that in the early 1760s aimed to keep the poor people down so that they would remain subservient and exploitable. The wealthy classes such as lawyers, publishers, merchants, etc., used their oratory and writings to manipulate the working class, putting criminal groups to work to set the rules of political behavior. When England began to impose a series of taxes on the American colonies, the spirit for independence was encouraged by the elites under the spirit of two different philosophies: Deism and Enlightenment, which had a great impact on the road to independence and the creation of a different society from that of 1630.

Within a century the society of the American colonies was completely transformed in its philosophy of life. It changed from a society that lived its life under religious principles. A Deist and Enlightenment figure of the time, who had the greatest influence in establishing a new philosophy in the society of the American colonies of 1776, was Thomas Paine. In 1776, Thomas Paine wrote a book entitled *Common Sense*, becoming the most popular book in the American colonies. The impact of this book was that it made public a bold argument: the colonies should demand independence. The language was easy for anyone to understand. In addition to denouncing the divine right of kings, he also laid out the practical advantages of staying with England or independence from it, showing the importance of the economy:

"I challenge anyone who defends the idea of reconciliation on the advantages that this continent will have by being connected to Great Britain. I repeat the challenge; no advantage will change. Our corn will reach its price in every market of Europe, and the imports will be paid for by it..."

Paine was an Enlightenment figure, but unlike the exploitative elites of the time he was an idealist of a political spectrum that would later be known as the left wing. Paine's book was liked by the colonists who were angry with England but caused some conflicts with aristocrats like John Adams (one of the American founding fathers) who was obviously with the patriotic cause but did not want this revolution to go too far in the direction of the democratic system. Adams believed that popular assemblies should be kept in check because they lead to hasty results and absurd judgments. Paine's "leftist" philosophy would manifest even more during the adaptation of the Constitution where he was in favor of a strong government.

There are different schools of thought regarding the causes of the American Revolution. Some historians consider them as economic and political causes, but it is clear from the books and letters written during that time that the Enlightenment philosophy of the eighteenth century had as its product not only the revolution for independence but also the revolution in the mentality of the colonies. The architects of the American Revolution seem to have had something else in mind beyond independence from Great Britain. They wanted to completely change the entire American society and establish a humanist government not founded on religious pillars. Inspired by John Locke, some of the architects of the Revolution and some of the American fathers believed that "government had its origin in the human race according to the conditions of a social contract for the preservation of those human rights that nature had provided. Through this contract, man benefits from the justice of power, and as a result, the government exists with the approval of the governed. When a human government fails to uphold the terms of the contract or fails to protect those rights it was created to protect, the citizens have a right to revolution."

The secular nature of this political philosophy was very clear. The architects of the Revolution and the radical Enlightenment knew what battle they were fighting. Under the spirit of democracy and the Enlightenment, Puritan society was being replaced by the sovereignty of the people and divine decrees were being replaced by the so-called social contract. Laws would not be made in accordance with religious laws but according to the public will of the majority that would have complete sovereignty.

In the post-war period, reformers occupied strategic positions in the formation of the new American state. At the declaration of independence, they were not many in number, "but they were few but in the right place." Believing that man was good in himself, the nation's reformers insisted that the true source of faith was nature and right reasoning. The new philosophies of the eighteenth century were trying to eradicate the Puritan tradition in every aspect of social, economic and political life.

It is not known whether the assignment of authorship of the most important document in US history was intentional or accidental, but the task of drafting the Declaration of Independence was given to a progressive and Enlightenment, Thomas Jefferson.

After the situation between the American colonies and Great Britain had worsened, in May 1776, the Second Continental Congress appointed a committee to draft a declaration of independence. This committee had five members: Thomas Jefferson of Virginia, John Adams of Massachusetts, Benjamin Franklin of Pennsylvania, Roger Sherman of Connecticut, and Robert R. Livingston of New York. This committee decided to assign Jefferson to draft the declaration since he was the best writer among them.

The Declaration of Independence established Jefferson as an icon of American history. And the document itself is a political, philosophical and social masterpiece.

The statement begins like this:

"When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation. We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

Inspired by John Locke and Thomas Paine, Jefferson included and promoted in this document "natural right" and that it is "self-evident" or natural that "men are created equal." When drafting the Declaration, Jefferson first wrote "the right of property" but then crossed it out and replaced it with "the pursuit of happiness." And it was precisely this expression that added value and importance to this declaration, which inspired peoples around the world to fight for their independence and to understand the fundamental rights that the individual has.

The Declaration of Independence is best known for its opening paragraph; it is rational in declaring self-proclaimed universal truths; individualistic in accepting the equal rights of all people to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; and democratic in the right of the people to establish a government that represents their will. The statement goes on to say that the "will of the governed" gives governments "appropriate powers" to ensure rights. This philosophy, inspired by Locke in the book *Second Treatise on Government*, implies that no matter what scheme is used it is enough to do the will of the people. It is clear that the Declaration leans more towards democracy than theocracy, more towards humanism than the Protestant Revolution.

In one of his letters, Jefferson clearly declares the progressive spirit in the drafting of the Declaration, where he mentions terms like "logic" inspired by Paine's Logic, and the philosophical basis of Aristotle, Locke, etc.:

"This was the purpose of the Declaration of Independence. Not to discover new principles, new arguments, not thought of before, nor simply to say things not said before; but to lay before all mankind the logic of the matter, in plain and decided words to seek their approbation, and to justify ourselves in the stand of independence which we have resolved to maintain. We have not attempted to set forth original principles or sentiments, nor copied from earlier writings, it was intended to be an expression of the American mind, and to give to that expression the proper tone and spirit needed for the occasion. Its authority lies in harmonizing the sentiments of the time, expressed in conversations, letters, printed essays, or in the leading books of public law, such as those of Aristotle, Cicero, Locke, Sidney, etc."

Using the phrase "all men are created equal" was probably not a deliberate attempt to make a statement about women. Women were excluded from consideration for inclusion. Politically, they were invisible. Although practical needs gave women a certain authority in the home, on the farm, or in other jobs, they were undervalued and excluded from any political rights and civil equality. Today, the non- inclusion of women and their rights in the declaration has raised skepticism about this document, which would have been even more emancipatory for America around the world if it had also included women's rights.

The Constitution of the United States of America

The second most important document in American history is the Constitution. This essential document has been the foundation of a country so rare and unique in the political and social mindset of a nation. Established a governance model that cannot be matched in the globe. E pluribus unum (Out of many, one), 50 states in one. A country with over 56 thousand governments. With thousands of governmental units divided into 36 thousand cities and towns, and 35 thousand separate districts! A mesmerizing reality for any other country but not for the USA that this diversity and multiplicity has united into one government, one nation and one flag! "Out of many, one" is a unique American hallmark! An inter-century reality that is not found anywhere else! Immigrants from all over the world came and continue to come to the land of freedom and plenty, but despite language, cultural and racial diversity, they are one. They are Americans! They live the American dream and try to be "good Americans," another concept that belongs only to America. "Out of many, one" is also seen in American society, a society that has reached an extraordinary harmony of the relationship between individualism and community. Two opposite binomials that perfectly and naturally merge into one. The individual fully reserves his/her personal rights and yet is free and responsible in the community, and part of a wider national affiliation.

"Americans are so enamored of equality, they would rather be equal in slavery than unequal in freedom," wrote Alexis de Tocqueville in 1835 in his classic book *Democracy in America*. Even today, regardless of origin and affiliation, everyone is equal before the law! And every individual is offered the opportunity to be whoever he or she wishes to be. Every individual is treated as worthy and valuable to society.

The US also has the most unique system of government in the world. The Constitution and the system of government were drafted precisely to prevent any individual from becoming king or tyrant. Just as there are dynamics in the lives of Americans, so there are dynamics in governance. This is evident in the equation of rotations of the congressmen, senators, electoral colleges, and the mandate of Supreme Court judges. The framers of the Constitution determined that the legislative power, ie Congress, consists of two chambers: the House of Representatives and the Senate. Each state sends a number of representatives to the House of Representatives according to the population of each state. While in the Senate, two representatives from each state regardless of population size. The purpose is to maintain the balance between direct representation and the leadership of the elites.

Furthermore, the Constitution stipulates that elections for the House of Representatives be held every two years, for the President every four years, for the Senate every six years, and for the term of office of Supreme Court judges to be permanent, in order that judges may not be affected by political rotations. This way the Constitution ensures the circulation of elites and the rotation of power.

Even the manner of electing senators or the President goes through an even more filtering rotation process. Article 1, Section 3, of the US Constitution states that: "(The Senate) shall be divided as equally as may be into three Classes. The Seats of the Senators of the first Class shall be vacated at the Expiration of the second Year, of the second Class at the Expiration of the fourth Year, and of the third Class at the Expiration of the sixth Year, so that one third may be chosen every second year." While the President, with a four-year term, is not directly elected by the people but by a group of representatives, known as the Electoral College, from each state.

America is a Republic and yet Democracy! Again, an American hallmark!

The political and governing system in the US is balanced and unique. The horizontal division of power in the United States is completely different from other countries. No other country is so obsessed with the separation of powers as in America. In presidential and parliamentary systems, in terms of horizontal separation of powers, or the political trias, it is the President, the Assembly or the Prime Minister who has more power over the other branches. Even a collegial institution like the Assembly can be turned into absolutism as both the Prime Minister and government ministers are elected at the Assembly by a simple majority. A parliamentary government in any other country does not face as many difficulties as American Presidents do in turning their

proposals into laws. Typically the government presents its legislature directly to the Assembly. It is the government that controls the calendar and legislative agenda.

This is completely different in the American system. The legislative agenda is not controlled by the President. Most laws that are passed are mostly a product of negotiations between the two chambers of Congress, rather than between Congress and the President.

America's most important export has been its Constitution. It was drafted as the first one-document constitution. It is the document with the longest lifespan. And over the last two centuries every nation has recognized the need and value of having a constitution. And in cases where countries have drafted one of their own, the reference has been precisely the American Constitution.

The US Constitution has a series of special amendments for human rights known as the Bill of Rights. The framers and signers of the US Constitution taught the world that there can be no constitution without a special section listing the individual rights.

As a Republic built on the rule of law and a consolidated and inspiring democracy, America has served as a beacon of light and hope around the world. It is sure to say that the "American Dream" has become the dream of peoples in the world. It is an ideal that in fact has inspired all the nations!

The constitution was divided into three powers: the legislature, the executive, and the judiciary. All three of these powers would check and balance each other in every aspect of governance. Neither of these powers was above the other, and neither could conspire or destroy the other. If any individual or group of individuals would abuse the power that was given to them, he or they would be brought before the law and justice by other powers. The Constitution appointed a Congress, President, and Supreme Court, but none of them had absolute authority. Only the God of the Christians who drew up this constitution had this supreme authority.

The humanistic concept of the separation of powers comes from the principle of *trias politica*; a model of government developed in ancient Greece and spread to the Roman Republic. This principle was made known by the French Enlightenment Baron de Montesquieu. But if Enlightenment and Humanism saw the separation of powers to ensure the right of the individual or the rule of law, for Christians the principle of separation of powers was even earlier than Greece and Rome, and provided three different powers but with one head only.

The Constitution gave the office of the President to be "Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces and the Navy, to issue pardons, to sign agreements with other nations (under the advice of the Senate), as well as to appoint ambassadors, ministers, consuls, judges of the Court Supreme."

The president was the leader of the war, but he could not declare war or pay for the war, as these powers were vested in the legislature. The constitution gave the legislature, the power with many individuals, more powers, while the executive, the power led by a single man, very few of them. The founders of the constitution did not allow a single man, or even a group of men, to take the destinies of a nation into their hands.

This would change later in the twentieth century, especially the declaration of war without the approval of Congress, which would make a single individual the person with the greatest power in the USA and therefore in the world.

The horizontal separation of power in the United States is completely different from other countries, however democratic they may be. No other country is as obsessed with the separation of powers as America. In presidential and parliamentary systems similar in terms of the horizontal division of power, it is the president, the parliament or the prime minister who have power over the others. Even a collegial institution like parliament can turn into absolutism as both the prime minister and government ministers are out of parliament as long as there is a simple majority.

It is assumed that if the same constitutional frameworks are applied in other countries, success will be guaranteed, regardless of the ideology that motivates and shapes people's perspective. This has not turned out to be true. For example, Bolivia had sixty revolts, ten constitutions, and six assassinated presidents between 1826 and 1898. Simon Bolivar (1783-1830), known as the George Washington of South America, died a disillusioned idealist because of his difficult character. to be governed by his people.

The success of a governing document depends on the character of the people and the perspective they have. Even John Adams, one of the American fathers and the second President of the USA, made it clear in his argument on this issue in 1789:

"Our constitution was drafted only for a moral and believing people. It does not fit with any government of any other nation."

But Howard Zinn expresses his skepticism about the inclusiveness of categories of people in the Constitution. According to him, there were four groups that were not included in the Constitutional Convention: slaves, servants, women, and men without property. For this reason, the Constitution had no way of representing the interests of these categories.

Zinn does not think that the Constitution was written solely for the personal gain of the American Fathers, however, one should not ignore Benjamin Franklin's \$150,000 fortune, Alexander Hamilton's relationship with his father-in-law and brother-in-law who were very wealthy, James Madison's large plantations, George Washington's large land

holdings. The Constitution was written to benefit what the fathers represented "the economic interests that they understood and saw as concrete, as final form through their personal experience."

It should be mentioned that one of the most important facts about the American Constitution is that it was written in 1787. If it had been written a few years earlier or a few years later it would be a very different document. The constitution was drafted during a brief interval of relative moderation between major political and social upheavals. It was written thirteen years after the declaration of independence, and the revolutionary passion symbolized in this all-important document had partially died out. Distrust of the government, developed during the long war with Britain, had lessened, though not entirely extinguished. Most importantly, 1787 was only two years before the outbreak of the French Revolution, which brought to Europe and America, irreconcilable divisions over the fundamental principles of the new, and extremely bitter types of party politics.

There was still time for the young nation to feel the first stirrings of romantic democracy. 1787 was still part of the eighteenth century; Etiquette and sometimes respect were considered by many to be virtues. The men who drafted the Constitution were human or at least part of the Enlightenment, that great European movement of thought that taught people that they could better understand the universe by trusting in the capacity of their own minds.

The framers of the Constitution belonged to a particular early part of the Enlightenment, somewhat conservative and moderate, that had at its heart a strong sense of balance and an orderly order in all things. For all these reasons, 1787 was a time when it was possible to reconcile philosophical, political and religious divisions.

The founders were both rationalists and empiricists. This is to say, that they believed that human beings can reach their own conclusions about certain important principles, especially moral principles, by reasoning directly from axioms that are already known and intuitive. However, most political judgments must be made on the basis of facts known from human experience.

In the science to which the framers of the Constitution most often referred, the science of government, they argued based on a broad consensus. They had read the same books. They based their political theory primarily on the classics, such as Aristotle, Polybius, Cicero, and others. They rarely mention Machiavelli, and very rarely other Italian Renaissance thinkers. More often they mentioned the European theorists of the past years and centuries like Grotius, Vattel, Pufendorf, and Burlamaqui. More often than not all of them referred to certain great figures of the moderate Enlightenment, such as Montesquieu, British legal authorities such as Blackstone, John Locke, the father of liberalism, David Hume, the defender of modernity and moderation, and the contemporary group of philosophers Scottish.

From this old and cumulative tradition, also called the tradition of civil humanism, the drafters of the Constitution and people of their rank had learned that there are three types of government: monarchy, aristocracy and democracy. Each of them had its strengths but also its risks, and the possibility of corruption. Monarchy, for Americans, was immediately canceled as an option, and some delegates sought to create in America a true aristocracy. But the most common fear in the Convention was the fear of pure democracy, of finding a certain level, of the oppression of the minority by the majority, as well as of the turbidity and stupidity of criminals. Some delegates, beginning with James Wilson and Benjamin Franklin, argued strongly for a large element of democracy in the new government, recalling the heroic actions of the people during the war and suggesting that it would be dangerous and unjust to curb the power of people who had already earned it by right. But everyone agreed that if there were democratic elements in the new government, they would be categorized and controlled.

The framers of the Constitution were practical men, men who had little need for ideas. When the Philadelphia delegates referred to history they believed that human nature was continuous and unchanging in all its periods, and that therefore classical precedents were absolutely as important in finding solutions to contemporary problems.

Clearly they were not economic determinists. Being intelligent people, they knew that concrete interests played a large role in determining human actions. Not being cynical either, they believed that these interests could be balanced with virtue and reason. In their arguments in favor of balanced government they constantly referred to history, especially the experience of Greece and Rome, all European efforts in the examples of confederations, the experience of the existing republics of Holland and Switzerland, and to the republican monarchy of Poland. They referred much more often to Britain's long experience of constitutional government. Finally they referred to their experience of governing in America, making use of the wonderful political laboratory afforded by thirteen distinct political structures. Another source of agreement, often silent but sometimes expressed, was the delegates' opinions about class differences. Of course the political class was limited to white males, but not all white males could be capable of doing government work. The obvious truth, most of the framers of the Constitution believed, was clearer to some than to others.

On the whole, the government would work better if it were managed in the hands of educated gentlemen and visionaries. Usually this would refer to people with property, and those who came from traditional families. Most hoped that there would be more mobility in America than in Europe. People should be able to move up into the ruling class, but only through education, work, and property. People without property were not to be trusted, as they were confined to narrow local matters. The worst lay with the unscrupulous demagogues who appealed to the passions of the crowd. The drafters were quite honest about all this; after all they were talking to each other behind closed doors.

After a long summer they arrived at some axioms: First, the purpose of government, everywhere and always, is to create and protect liberty. Second, there can be no freedom without order, just as there can be no freedom and order without property. Thirdly, as men are unequal in their ability, there would always be inequality of property, though it was to be hoped that it would be less flagrant here than in Europe. Fourth, since there will always be a minority and a majority, the government's job is to protect one against the other. Fifth, for this and other reasons, there must be a separation of powers. Since in America there was no special order, neither king nor hereditary nobility, balance had to be achieved even when the whole government rested on the people. This meant, among other things, that each branch had to be elected in a different way and that the President, Senate, and Congress had to be elected by separate electorates.

The US Constitution has served best in protecting liberty against threats from the executive and legislative branches, power-hungry, coup d'états, and juntas. It has been a wonderful instrument for reconciling enmities and reaching compromises.

Later, in 1835, Alexis de Tocqueville, the keenest foreign observer of the United States, praised the framers of the Constitution even more highly:

At the time it was formed, the destruction of the Confederacy seemed inevitable, and its dangers were universally recognized. In this extremity, the people chose people who deserved credit for themselves instead of those who had won the sympathy of the country They stood out for their intelligence; they stood out even more for their patriotism They had the courage to speak what was believed to be true, because they were filled with a warm and sincere love of liberty; and if they proposed limitations of liberty, it was because they were most decidedly opposed to the destruction of liberty itself.

There have even been many attempts to import the US Constitution and system of government, and implement them in other parts of the world, but they have been unsuccessful. This has been due to the fact that the American Constitution and system of government are a reflection of the American mentality, values and identity. And this great achievement is thanks to the two most important documents of all times, the Declaration of Independence and the US Constitution.

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